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Allegorical Consent: *The Faerie Queene* and the Politics of Erotic Subjection

This essay examines *The Faerie Queene*'s use of erotic subjection as a political metaphor for theorizing the relation between conquest and consent. In the Radigund episode of Book V, Spenser explores the gender dynamics of this trope, as the subjected body is male and the monarch, female. These scenes act as a powerful counter-narrative to the poem's earlier representations of erotic subjection by showing that external obedience cannot be equated with consent. Radigund forces Artegall to wear women's clothing and to do women's work, but this submission constitutes nothing more than slavery. The narrative blends political domination with sexual conquest to demonstrate that compliance is not loyalty and violence cannot elicit love.

Marriage and erotic subjection loom large in the political imagination of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*. These acts appear repeatedly as characters pledge oaths to a beloved or are taken captive by a sexual aggressor. These allegorical scenes of desire and violence enter into sixteenth-century debates about tyranny and kingship by examining questions of consent and hierarchy. Perhaps the most striking juxtaposition of these relations occurs in Canto xi of Book IV. In Proteus's house, Spenser depicts the marriage of the rivers Thames and Medway, a symbolic union of the English nation that establishes the country's political

power in the subjects rather than the monarch. Within the structural foundation of Proteus's house, however, a more disturbing narrative haunts the wedding. For more than sixteen cantos, Florimell has been confined to Proteus's subterranean dungeon. An archetypal example of erotic subjection, her subdued body is completely under the sea god's control, yet her body is not the primary object of the violence. Instead, Proteus holds her in order to elicit her assent by mastering her will. Elizabeth Fowler argues that "when Spenser chooses marriage and the epithalamion for his description of the English constitution, opposing it to Proteus's tyranny, he chooses a particularly sexual consent as constitutive of the polity."¹ Scenes of seduction and coercion therefore explore the political middle ground between the Medway's free consent and Florimell's imprisonment.

Throughout *The Faerie Queene*, perpetrators of erotic subjection pursue sexual consent rather than overcome their victims through force alone. Busirane, for instance, imprisons and tortures Amoret in order to elicit her consent. He desires her body but only if she yields it to him. This narrative pattern demonstrates the importance of consent for monarchs and tyrants alike. It suggests that assent, even if coerced, is a necessary ground for dominion. Characters continually test the flexibility of volition in these scenes as they attempt to manipulate another's will. The repetition of this plot structure raises questions about the difference between conquest and consent, coercion and persuasion. Melissa Sanchez convincingly argues that these categories become confused in the poem because the subject's desire to be subdued can blur the distinction between legitimate sovereignty and illegitimate tyranny.² She posits that Scudamour's abduction of his beloved "can be only sanctioned retroactively through the lens of Amoret's subsequent loyalty to him."³ The difference between her torture by Busirane and her capture by Scudamour seems to be her eventual acquiescence to (and ensuing love of) the latter. Sanchez's work illuminates the questionable status of seemingly voluntary love and free consent, categories that serve as the foundations of both the institution of marriage and the commonwealth. Differentiating between male force and female consent can be difficult in the poem, and Amoret's abduction presents the terrifying possibility that dominated individuals unwittingly collude with tyranny.

Challenging the lessons of Scudamour's violence, this essay examines the Radigund episode's powerful counter-narrative wherein conquest and consent are not coextensive. Whereas Amoret eventually gives in to her assailant by falling in love, Artegall resists Radigund's advances. Rather than

merely repel her assault, however, the knight openly submits to her beauty on the battlefield but never consents to her sexually. Earlier instantiations of erotic subjection consider political bonds through sexual narrative, but the Radigund scenes curiously combine them. In these cantos, Spenser drives a wedge between submission and consent, a division too easily elided in earlier books. Artegall's external compliance proves to be mere slavery rather than the consensual bond between sovereign and subject. The knight's political submission and obedience are separate from his sexual consent as his compliant body does not determine his erotic choices.⁴

Spenser demonstrates this division between submission and consent through a complex treatment of gender in which the allegory itself comes into relief. Whereas earlier episodes represent male political subjects through female bodies, here femininity is a role to play. This change highlights the relationship between political consent and allegorical poetics. Spenser reconsiders the trope of erotic subjection, troubling the fit between the fleshly vehicle and the political tenor. Radigund forces Artegall into the culturally submissive position of a woman by making him wear women's clothing and do women's work. The knight appears to fit the allegory of a subjected female body, but by refusing Radigund's sexual advances, Artegall shows that external compliance cannot be equated to internal desire. As an allegorist, Radigund has limited power. She can enslave the knight but cannot elicit his consent. This episode opens a rare space for resistance to the violence of allegorical signification.

Rather than negate the political implications of Scudamour's brutality, the Radigund episode highlights the multivalent nature of Spenserian allegory, as the poem always presents multiple, often contradictory, perspectives.⁵ In *The Faerie Queene*, fictions of erotic subjection contemplate hierarchy and consent, but they resist unequivocal arguments about either through their diversity. These thought experiments, moreover, do not necessarily align with systems of governance. Recent debates about Spenser and Republicanism have illuminated much about the poet's political thinking, but taking a hard line on his alliances seems to run counter to the poem's method for creating meaning.⁶ Spenser uses scenes of sexual enthrallment to contemplate tyranny and just government, but a cohesive political agenda is not embodied in the allegory.

The Faerie Queene enters into sixteenth-century debates about political structures by complicating and challenging the metaphors on which contemporary theorists rely. Political philosophers regularly employ the trope of sexual union as political union, a metaphor that can be traced back

at least as far as Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.⁷ Thomas Smith's treatise on English government, *De Republica Anglorum*, also uses marriage as a metaphor for the relationship between sovereign and subject, but his use of the trope reveals a troubling blind spot in his philosophical system. While describing the ideal commonwealth, Smith writes, "Then if this [the polis] be a societie, and consisteth onely of freemen, the least part thereof must be of two. The naturalest and first conjunction of two toward the making of a further societie of continuance is of the husband and the wife."⁸ In this fiction delineating the foundations of the commonwealth, man and woman come together of their own volition as "freemen." This myth functions first as narrative. The union will result in more people, who in turn procreate until they form a true commonwealth. The marriage is both a constitutive unit of the polis and the larger, metaphorical bond between state and subject.⁹

Contrary to the idealized parity of this bond, some autocratic thinking briefly appears in Smith's description of sexual union as the shadow of force lurks uncomfortably behind his conception of consent. He explains how different parts of the polis rule in different ways. In the private commonwealth, both the man and the woman rule according to their various strengths. The man has "greater wit, bigger strength, and more courage to compell the woman to obey by reason or force, and to the woman bewtie, faire countenance, and sweete wordes to make the man obey her againe for love" (59). Twenty-first century readers might scoff at this sexist portrayal of female power, but this patriarchal inequality parallels a mixed government in which the monarch has the bulk of the state's strength, and the feminized subjects have far less, even through their role in parliament. The suggestion that force can be used to compel the woman's obedience, however, grates against Smith's own rejection of tyrants, "who by force commeth to the Monarchy against the will of the people" (53). His description of marriage leaves open the question of when force is admissible, since he does not specify proper and improper use of it. The fully consensual union is belied by the problem of male, and thus monarchical, violence.

In *The Prince*, Niccolò Machiavelli explicitly discusses the necessity of force on the part of the monarch. Whereas Smith uses marriage as an analogy for consensual political bonds, Machiavelli uses the trope to convey the domination of the people by a prince. Gordon Teskey even claims that in Machiavelli's trope of the feminized subject, the prince figuratively sodomizes the people.¹⁰ They are imagined as a single female body that, like Lady Fortune, must be beaten in order to "keep her under"

or “control her.”¹¹ This transformation of subjects takes narrative form in the Radigund episode, raising questions about the trope itself—asking if male subjects can be transformed into female persons against their will.

In the context of thinking about feminized subjects, the definition of “woman” itself becomes an important consideration. Florimell and Amoret have female bodies that serve as vulnerable vehicles for political allegories of state violence.¹² Radigund, on the other hand, foists femininity upon the male knights. She forces them into the trope of the feminized subject. This point makes explicit the allegorizing tendency of political subjection.¹³ Just as Thomas Hobbes would imagine the people of the commonwealth coming together into a single body of the monarch, here too is an allegorical understanding of the relationship between sovereign and individual. Radigund attempts to transform an autonomous character into a subject. The violence of this signification recalls Teskey’s theory of “capture,” in which Neoplatonic metaphysics—wherein the penetrating male form seizes the resisting female matter—is represented through narrative.¹⁴ This theoretical framework is allegorized in violent scenes such as that in the House of Busirane. Artegall’s resistance to Radigund’s forceful seizure, however, complicates Teskey’s theory by portraying signification as a consensual endeavor. While Neoplatonic metaphysics depicts matter as recalcitrant to signification, it does not allow any real space for material agency. Resisting female bodies will eventually concede to force. Artegall, however, refuses to participate in sexual intercourse with Radigund, a crucial part of the allegorical gendering. This failure of signification demonstrates that political allegory depends just as much on the will of the subject as it does on the violence of the monarch.

Radigund first attempts to fashion Artegall into a feminized subject through clothing and labor. After she has dominion over the knight, the Amazon queen strips him of his armor. This divestiture dissolves his claim to a knight’s position. The armor represents his place within the realm’s social structures as well as the tools by which he can act out that role.¹⁵ Radigund

caused him to be disarmed quight
Of all the ornaments of knightly name,
With which whylome he gotten had great fame. . . . (V.v.20)¹⁶

The divestment seems to strip him of his social position by removing its visual representation. To fit Artegall to the allegorical position of subject, Radigund must make him a woman. Accordingly, she

made him to be dight
 In womans weedes, that is to manhood shame
 And put before his lap a napron white,
 In stead of Curiets and bases fit for fight. (V.v.20)

Through clothing, Radigund attempts to condition Artegall to this role as a woman. Ann Jones and Peter Stallybrass argue that “clothes permeate the wearer, fashioning him or her within. This notion undoes the opposition of inside and outside, surface and depth.”¹⁷ This relation of inside to outside is especially true in allegory, a mode in which all signs point upward or outward. But, in fact, the female vestments do not function as they should. Radigund uses female clothing to fashion the knight into a woman, but it fails to transform him fully. The exterior image does not determine his meaning. Artegall wears the clothing, but an interior self resists being shaped by it.

In Spenser’s *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, Eudoxus similarly discusses political domination in terms of gendered clothing. He recalls Aristotle’s account of the Lydian’s pugnacious nature being subdued through women’s gowns.

Mens apparel is commonly made according to their conditions, and their conditions are oftentimes governed by their garments: for the person that is gowned, is by his gowne put in minde of gravitie, and also restrained from lightnes, by the very unaptness of his weed. Therefore it is written by Artistotle, that when Cyrus had overcome the Lydians that were a warlike nation, and devised to bring them to a more peaceable life, hee changed their apparell and musick, and, in stead of their short warlike coat, cloathed them in long garments like women . . . by which in short space their mindes were so mollified and abated, that they forgot their former fiercenesse, and became most tender and effeminate; whereby it appeareth, that there is not a little in the garment to the fashioning of the minde and conditions.¹⁸

This material fashioning blurs the boundaries between political allegory and gender roles. The fierce Lydians cannot be fully subdued until they are made effeminate through women’s gowns. The Radigund episode, however, suggests that clothing has a limited ability to fashion an individual. Artegall looks the part of a woman, but this guise does not constitute his person. In fact, looking the role is part of the allegorical problem of the episode. Radigund tries to transform him

into a subject of the kingdom through clothing's emblematic function, signifying Artegall's allegorical relation to the monarch. Whereas the feminization of the Lydians effectively elicits their consent, the Radigund episode explicitly differentiates between feminized submission and consensual governance.

The word play of the investiture passage anticipates the sexualized domination of Artegall's drag. Radigund "made him to be dight / In womans weedes." "Dight" most directly means that he is dressed. Other definitions of the term, however, signal the importance of the clothing, many of which relate to governance and range from directing to ruling or managing.¹⁹ Spenser might also be punning on the late Middle English definition that the *Oxford English Dictionary* euphemizes as "to have to do with sexually," a meaning of which Chaucer's Wife of Bath is quite fond. By dighting Artegall, Radigund would assume the role of a man. Unlike the Modern English "fuck," which is flexible in terms of gender, every example of "dight" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Middle English Dictionary* presents a man dighting a woman.²⁰ Of course, "dight" also means to construct, make, or do. This rich word illuminates the confluence of sexual and political meanings evoked by the external gendering of Artegall through attire.

The poem's representations of vestments in the episode recall Thomas Smith's use of clothing to talk figuratively about the fit between people and the commonwealth. In *De Republica Anglorum*, Smith argues that the commonwealth must be shaped according to the nature of the people:

It doth appeare that the mutations and changes of fashions of government of common wealthes be naturall, and do not always come of ambition or malice: And that according to the nature of the people, so the commonwealth is to it fit and proper. And as all these iii. kindes of common wealthes are naturall, so when to ech partie or espece and kinde of the people that is geaven which agreeth as ye would putt a garment fyt to a man's bodie or a shoe fyt to a man's foot, so the bodie politique is in quiet, and findeth ease, pleasure and profit thereby. But if a contrary forme be given to a contrary maner of people, as when the shoe is too litle or too great for the foote, it doth hurt and encomber and letteth the convenient use thereof, so that free people of nature tyrannized or ruled by one against their willes, were he never so good, either faile of corage and wexe servile, or never rest while they either destroie their king or them that would subdue them, or be destroyed themselves. (62–63)

For Smith, the type of government must be chosen according to the nature of the people, as one would fit clothing to the shape of an individual. The state, therefore, is dependent on the nature of the subjects. If a form of government does not fit them, then they will not consent to its authority and the state will unsuccessfully try to rule against their will. For Smith, the fit and resulting consent are necessary for the survival of the commonwealth. The Radigund episode engages with this very passage as it tests whether a people can be forcibly subjected or if their consent is necessary. Irenius, a speaker from *The View*, suggests the former when discussing the reformation of Ireland. Ideally, the commonwealth is formed according to the nature of a people, but the rebellions against the New English necessitate more dramatic approaches. Irenius explains: "Therefore sithence wee cannot now apply lawes fit to the people, as in the first institutions of commonwealths it ought to bee, wee will apply the people, and fit them unto the lawes, as it most conveniently may bee" (135). This haunting reversal of Smith's metaphor euphemizes the bloodshed needed to subdue the Irish. English political authority is fixed, and the Irish people will be fit to its legal system through complete submission rather than by their consent. The Radigund episode, however, seems to side with Smith, rather than with Spenser's own Irenius. People cannot be fit to the clothing of state authority. Artegall becomes the image of the loyal subject (submissive and feminized), but the narrative suggests that external signs of submission cannot be understood as consent and cannot bring about that consent.

The Radigund episode also examines labor as a secondary means of fashioning. Following Ovid's portrayal of Hercules and Omphale, Spenser depicts Radigund compelling Artegall to complete women's work in accordance with his new clothing. The knights are "bound t'obay that Amazons proud law, / Spinning and carding all in comely rew" (V.v.22). The men are forced to complete work that was reserved for women in early modern England. Radigund attempts to condition the knights to a new social person through labor. They must work and can eat only that which "their hands could earne by twisting linnen twyne" (V.v.22). These tasks serve to accustom the men to their subjection through daily toil. Note also the term "rew," which refers to a line, an image of labor that anticipates the modern sweat shop. The term's secondary meaning is a street or a row of houses.²¹ The text draws parallels between the fashioning of the men and the physical layout of the state. This episode, however, goes even further to imagine the interconnected nature of such habituation, for the play on "bound" links the labor with their subjugation. While the law requires that

the knights generate textile materials for a paltry sum, it also mandates that they wear women's clothing. In this closed economy, the men create the conditions of their own subjection. In order to feed themselves, they have to perpetuate the structures of society that disenfranchise them.

This gendered labor, however, illuminates some problems with Artegall's position. Radigund does not fashion him into a subject but instead forces him into slavery. The text emphasizes his radical "subiection" to the queen, continually calling him her "thrall" or "vassal" (V.v.17–18).²² Consent-based political theory regularly uses the slave as the antithesis of the assenting subject. Thomas Smith argues that even if one man had ten thousand slaves who dwelled in a single city, such a conglomeration of men would not constitute a commonwealth (57). For Smith, a commonwealth must be a consensual union of free men.²³ Artegall's slavery is at odds with the political significance of the gendered position into which Radigund thrusts him. While servitude represents involuntary domination, sexual union suggests the free will of the participant. In the Huguenot tract *Vindiciae, Contra Tyrannos*, the anonymous author argues that "subjects are not slaves of the king at all, as is commonly said. For they are neither captured in war nor bought for money."²⁴ Artegall, however, is explicitly captured in war. Like Smith, the author of *Vindiciae* draws a clear line between conquest and consent, a distinction that is often difficult to map onto English political practice. Consider, for instance, the colonial project in Ireland in which New English control of the island was premised upon the legal fiction that Henry II's twelfth-century invasion established ownership of the realm through conquest, while simultaneously claiming that the Irish fully consented to English sovereignty.²⁵ The disjunction between conquest and consent is at the nexus of sexual and political narratives in the Radigund scenes, which present slavery as the image of governance without consent. In this light, conquest is a troubling ethical foundation and antithetical to consent-based political theory.

As a feminized slave, therefore, Artegall represents contradictory political images of forced subjugation and consensual governance.²⁶ Prior to Radigund's incipient desire for her captive knight, however, the poem never considers his consent. Artegall "submitted in plaine field" to the Amazon queen (V.v.16). Rather than being defeated, the knight "yeelded of his owne accord" and accepts his thralldom (V.v.17). Spenser distinguishes between submission and consent by making the knight submit to her beauty rather than to her greater strength. Artegall's submission is free and uncoerced but is not consent. The episode suggests that physical obedience to laws

does not constitute consensual governance. Artegall dons women's clothing and does women's work but never assents to loving the monarch. His obedience constitutes nothing more than slavery, a fact that becomes central to Radigund's sexual pursuit of her captive knight.

Artegall's resistance to the trope of the feminized political subject reveals the importance of consent for allegory. As I argue above, these scenes examine the political trope that imagines male subjects as a collective female person. In other instances of erotic subjection, perpetrators of sexual violence (such as Scudamour in the House of Venus) conflate the vulnerability of the female body with sexual consent. Whereas Amoret eventually succumbs to her assailant's force, Artegall resists the power of the sovereign allegorist by refusing to step into the position of subject. Radigund pursues his sexual consent but never receives it. External compliance does not develop into love. As we will see, her earlier attempts to dominate him will become more aggressive as she tries to subdue his will.

The episode bears on our sense of how allegory functions in the poem more generally, insofar as Artegall's significance is contingent upon his consensual acceptance of an allegorical person—the feminized political subject. Angus Fletcher argues that personifications are daemonic characters who compulsively embody abstractions.²⁷ Their seemingly determined actions raise questions about the relationship between free will and allegorical characters. For Fletcher and others, allegory exerts “a tyrannically constraining or deadening pressure on the poem's characters,” to borrow Andrew Escobedo's suggestive wording.²⁸ The Radigund episode, however, seems to present a different form of allegory, one that allows characters to accept or reject the constraints of personification. The feminized, allegorical position is a role to which Artegall must consent. Although clothing and labor turn him into the allegorical *image* of the feminized subject, he fails to embody that emblem. This episode is different from much of the poem in that the allegorical role cannot be thrust upon the character. Susanne Wofford makes a similar argument about Britomart's resistance to Busirane's allegorical violence.²⁹ Wofford, in fact, compares sovereign power to the tyrannical forces of allegory:

What is important here for Spenser's poetics is the link between the figures of compulsion generated by the allegorical representations and the kinds of social compulsion and obligation that these figures shadow forth. The poem's tropes of enclosure and imprisonment can be treated as a dark figuration of the nature and the effects of the

monarch's power—dark from the point of view of the narrator because it suggests that the allegory is implicated in such a system of social and political control, and equally dark from a political perspective because compulsion cannot be acknowledged within the moral economy of the Elizabethan state (where it must be figured as patronage and inspiration).³⁰

Wofford reveals that political domination becomes narrative in Spenserian allegory. As she shows, scenes of erotic subjection scrutinize the power of the monarch to impose her will upon male subjects. Artegall's resistance, however, demonstrates that allegorical and political compulsion are not always compulsive. There is a space of resistance and agency *within* the allegory.

The Radigund scenes show that the relation between allegory and will bears directly upon how Spenser imagines the poesis of political consent. Artegall wears the image of the vulnerable female character but refuses to consent to its emblematic meaning. It is important to keep in mind, however, that Artegall does not explicitly consider his options. As Escobedo argues about will in *The Faerie Queene* generally, characters do not actively choose; rather, they deliberately express "volitional mastery" of their desire.³¹ Artegall submits to Radigund, overcome by her beauty, but controls this desire, recognizing that it is not love. This point qualifies Wofford's argument, complicating her claim that "there is no escape possible within allegory . . . whether allegorical or political," except as a longing for release from such compulsion.³² In the middle cantos of Book V, there are layers of meaning that have no "outside" within the episode.³³ Radigund forces Artegall into a feminine role, but the larger allegory encloses this trope, as his resistance also has allegorical significance. In fact, the knight's refusal to consent to Radigund's political and sexual allegory is the allegorical center of the episode. The monarch's power is contingent upon the will of the subject.

The narrative turns toward desire to draw out the full implications of the conceit of erotic subjection. After physically subduing Artegall and dressing him in women's clothing, the Amazon queen finds herself attracted to the foreign knight. As she thinks through the situation, however, the political and sexual categories continue to blur. Despite being tormented by desire,

Yet would she not thereto yeeld free accord,
To serue the lowly vassall of her might,
And of her seruant make her souerayne Lord:
So great her pride, that she such basenesse much abhord. (V.v.27)

The line "yeeld free accord" repeats Artegall's terms of submission, in which he "yeelded of his owne accord" just ten stanzas earlier (V.v.17). Radigund can imagine only a union that is founded upon domination and submission. In this case, Artegall would be in the man's position and Radigund, the woman's. She abhors the poem's categories of gendered enthrallment, refusing to obey the person she has enslaved. Her sexual/political imagination, however, is not static and she continues to explore various kinds of bonds between sovereign and subject, lover and beloved.

She subsequently envisions a union founded upon mutual consent. In this ideal state, she yields not to Artegall's sovereignty, but to Love's.

She gan to stoupe, and her proud mind conuert
To meeke obeysance of loues mightie raine,
And him entreat for grace, that had procur'd her paine. (V.v.28)

Love now becomes the tyrant who seeks submission. This classical Petrarchan trope evokes the kind of mutuality Spenser imagines in the consensual enslavement of the *Amoretti*.³⁴ After she comes to accept her love of Artegall, Radigund tells her handmaid Clarin of her secret love. She asks

What right is it, that he should thraldome find,
For lending life to me a wretch vnkind;
That for such good him recompence with ill?
Therefore I cast, how I may him vnbind,
And by his freedome get his free goodwill;
Yet so, as bound to me he may continue still.

Bound vnto me, but not with such hard bands
Of strong compulsion, and streight violence,
As now in miserable state he stands;
But with sweet loue and sure beneuolence,
Voide of malicious mind, or foule offence.
To which if thou canst win him any way,
Without discouerie of my thoughts pretence,
Both goodly meede of him it purchase may,
And eke with gratefull seruice me right well apay. (V.v.32–33)

When Radigund falls in love, she begins to think in terms of partially consensual bonds. She recognizes that her political system unjustly enslaves her beloved. She does not, however, envision complete freedom. While unbinding Artegall physically, she endeavors to bind him emotionally and mentally—a strategy wherein the free consent of the loving subject elides the political compulsion at work. Interestingly, Radigund does not try to seduce Artegall directly but sends her servant Clarin as an emissary. To gain his love, she will offer physical freedom in return for “gratefull service.” This political approach conceives of their relationship in terms of a feudal gift economy, in which largesse must be repaid with obeisance.

After Clarin reports that Artegall will allow only his body to be her thrall, not his heart, Radigund lists the various strategies that her handmaid should take to seduce the knight. First, she should “leau nought vnpromist,” offering gifts, grace, and freedom (V.v.49). These promises expand upon the previous strategy of gifting. Radigund then advises Clarin to “adde art, euen womens witty trade, / The art of mightie words, that men can charme” (V.v.49). The lines recall Busirane’s “thousand charmes” that he wrote with Amoret’s blood (III.xii.31). Radigund, like the numerous Petrarchan suitors in the epic, will attempt to gain Artegall’s consent through rhetoric.

It should be noted that Clarin herself falls in love with the knight and subsequently misrepresents Radigund’s intentions to Artegall. Even more interesting, she secretly ignores her sovereign’s orders to starve and abuse him. Clarin’s disobedience to the queen mirrors the knight’s refusal to consent because her desire (like Artegall’s love for Britomart) violates her supposed loyalty to Radigund. Artegall presents an outward show of kindness to Clarin.

So daily he faire semblant did her shew,
Yet neuer meant he in his noble mind,
To his owne absent loue to be vntrew. . . . (V.v.56)

Artegall’s internal resistance contrasts with his external obedience. Likewise, Clarin works to secure his chains against her queen’s wishes, secretly refusing “his bondage to vnbind; / But rather how she mote him faster tye” (V.v.56). In these scenes, desire cannot be compelled. Britomart succinctly expresses this sentiment early in Book III: “For soone as maistry comes, sweet loue anone / Taketh his nimble winges, and soone away is gone” (III.i.25).³⁵

Radigund, on the other hand, is determined to master Aretegall's will. She gives Clarin the freedom to abuse him if the above measures fail to elicit his consent. Clarin should make "him feelee hardnesse of thy heauie arme" (V.v.49).

Some of his diet doe from him withdraw;
 For I him find to be too proudly fed.
 Giue him more labour, and with streighter law,
 That he with worke may be forwearied.
 Let him lodge hard, and lie in strawen bed,
 That may pull downe the courage of his pride;
 And lay vpon him, for his greater dread,
 Cold yron chaines, with which let him be tide;
 And let, what euer he desires, be him denide. (V.v.50)

Here Radigund imagines consent as a devastation of the will. Once Artegall is physically destroyed, he will be unable to resist, and his giving up can be equated with consent.

These methods of starvation and abuse take elicited consent to its logical extreme, asking the reader what consent would mean under such conditions. Radigund then uses a suggestive simile to describe her strategy.

When thou hast all this doen, then bring me newes
 Of his demeane: thenceforth not like a louer,
 But like a rebell stout I will him vse.
 For I resolute this siege not to giue ouer,
 Till I the conquest of my will recouer. (V.v.51)

Radigund asks Clarin to report on his "demean," a word glossed by A. C. Hamilton as "behaviour."³⁶ In the legal context of the episode, it also evokes *demeine* or *demesne*, the possession of land or lordship in which the land is occupied by that lord.³⁷ In the wordplay, consent is imagined as ownership and occupation of one's own body, giving up that consent as a forfeiture of land rights. Conquest, of course, is the acquisition of a territory through force. When consent becomes a conquest of the will, however, the "free goodwill" of state and subject is compromised.

If the coercive strategies of this scene seem to be mere symbols for other, less violent methods of fashioning, they should be placed alongside Spenser's treatment of such tactics in the *View*, in which Irenius outlines a plan to starve the Irish into submission:

So soone as it shall appeare that the enemy is brought downe, and the stout rebell either cut off, or driven to that wretchednesse, that hee is no longer able to holde up his head, but will come to any conditions . . . upon which it is likely that so many as survive, will come in to sue for grace, of which who so are thought meet for subjection, and fit to be brought to good, may be received . . . For in that case who will not accept almost of any conditions, rather than dye of hunger and miserie? (118–19)

Both Irenius and Radigund plan to destroy the resistant human beings—those stout rebels—who refuse to accept political subjection. If free consent cannot be justly elicited, then vicious means will be employed. Although Radigund's strategies are never implemented because of Clarin's deception and Radigund's decapitation, Artegall's earlier resistance suggests that consent cannot be brought about by force. In Clarin's words, "His bodie was her thrall, his hart was freely plast" (V.v.46).

The Radigund episode offers another perspective on Spenser's continued interrogation of conquest and consent. If Scudamour's abduction of Amoret provides a disturbing example of violence blurring into love, then Radigund's failure demonstrates the inability of force to generate political loyalty. Spenser uses these scenes to distinguish between external compliance and internal desire. The former proves to be unstable ground on which to build the state's foundation. This lesson in governance sits uncomfortably with Irenius's plans to starve and beat the Irish into submission. English control of the island was never stable because it never had the support of the Irish people. Furthermore, the political necessity of consent helps to explicate the forms of sexual violence that pervade *The Faerie Queen*. In the poem, perpetrators of erotic subjection nearly always seek the dominated individual's consent, even though the body is already possessed. As allegorical images of tyranny, these characters cannot rule by force alone. Through Artegall's recalcitrance, the poem debates Machiavelli's oft repeated dictum that it is safer for a prince to be feared than to be loved.³⁸ *The Faerie Queene* unveils the allegoresis of political domination to expose the human bodies beneath—bodies capable of the thoughtful resistance that Spenser sought to fashion through his dark conceit.

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NOTES

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1. Elizabeth Fowler, *Literary Character: The Human Figure in Early English Writing* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 204.

2. Melissa E. Sanchez, *Erotic Subjects: The Sexuality of Politics in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 57–85.

3. Sanchez, 63.

4. This episode has curiously not been examined in terms of modes of governmental rule. Instead, scholarship has fruitfully explored its topical significance and its treatment of gender. On the Irish contexts, see Clare Carroll, “The Construction of Gender and the Cultural and Political Other in *The Faerie Queene* 5 and *A View of The Present State of Ireland*: the Critics, the Context, and the Case of Radigund,” *Criticism* 32.2 (1990 Spring): 163–92. On the episode’s portrayal of slavery, see Maureen Quilligan, “On the Renaissance Epic: Spenser and Slavery,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100.1 (2001): 15–39. On gender and the figure of the Amazon, see Kathryn Schwarz, *Tough Love: Amazon Encounters in the English Renaissance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 137–74. On Radigund as Elizabeth, see Mary Villeponteaux, “‘Not as women wonted be’: Spenser’s Amazon Queen,” in *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana*, ed. Julia M. Walker (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 209–25. On Artegall’s imprisonment as an overindulgence of mercy that emasculates justice, see Andrew Zurcher, *Spenser’s Legal Language* (Rochester, NY: Brewer, 2007), 65 and 145–48. C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), reads the allegory as a critique of uxoriousness (348). Angus Fletcher, *The Prophetic Moment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971) argues that Radigund turns the values of chivalry into chaos by inverting the social hierarchy (247). Richard McCabe, *Spenser’s Monstrous Regiment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), reads Artegall’s anti-heroic emasculation as a blend of sexual and colonial anxieties surrounding Queen Elizabeth and the violence in Ireland (230). Louis Montrose, “Spenser and the Elizabethan Political Imaginary,” *ELH* 69 (2002): 907–47, posits that Britomart (representing Elizabeth) must reinstate men’s control over women by beheading Radigund (953–56).

5. Elizabeth Fowler, “The Failure of Moral Philosophy in the Work of Edmund Spenser,” *Representations* 51 (1995): 47–71, argues that the poet “is never explicit or even coherent about what he thinks in terms of politics or policy; he presents positions but does not own them. His treatment of policy is interrogative rather than imperative” (55). On the multivalent and recursive nature of Spenserian allegory, see Gordon Teskey, “Allegory,” in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 16–22; Teskey’s “Thinking

Moments in *The Faerie Queene*,” *Spenser Studies* 22 (2007): 103–25; Carol V. Kaske, *Spenser and Biblical Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999); and Lauren Silberman, “*The Faerie Queene*, Book V, and the Politics of the Text,” The Kathleen Williams Lecture, 2002, *Spenser Studies* 19 (2004): 1–16.

6. See Andrew Hadfield, “Was Spenser a Republican?” *English* 47 (1998): 169–82; David Scott Wilson-Okamura, “Republicanism, Nostalgia, and the Crowd,” *Spenser Studies* 17 (2003): 253–67; Hadfield’s rejoinder, “Was Spenser Really a Republican After All?: Response to David Scott Wilson-Okamura,” in the same issue of *Spenser Studies*, 275–90; and Andrew Sisson, “After Rome; or, Why Spenser Was Not a Republican,” *Spenser Studies* 28 (2013): 83–118. In a recent review of Spenser’s politics, David J. Baker, “Spenser and Politics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Edmund Spenser*, ed. Richard McCabe (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, 48–64), suggests that the poet “can best be understood as a close student (and exemplar) of the problems around which Renaissance political theory organized itself, not as a steady advocate of any one agenda or doctrine” (49).

7. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1160b–1161a.

8. Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum*, ed. Mary Dewar (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1882), 58. All quotations to the work are from this edition.

9. Marriage could be understood to represent the state by synecdoche since it is both a part of the polis and represents the whole. In *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Roland Greene et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), Wallace Martin argues that the space of interaction between the parts of an instance of synecdoche is ideology (1400).

10. Gordon Teskey, *Allegory and Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 134–35.

11. Translations of the infamous passage are respectively: *The Prince*, trans. Angelo Codevilla (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 93; *The Prince*, trans. Russell Price, ed. Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 87.

12. Throughout this essay I use “state” to talk about structures of governance. “State” is sometimes more useful than monarch, kingship, or sovereign because it allows for a plurality of political forms that need not be centralized in a single human body. “Consent” is an important political concept for both republican and monarchic theories of government.

13. Fowler similarly points out that Scudamour justifies his abduction of Amoret by means of personification allegory, a move that diffuses her agency into the poetics of his story (“The Failure of Moral Philosophy,” 58).

14. Teskey, *Allegory and Violence*, 1–31 and 122–47.

15. In *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Ann Jones and Peter Stallybrass argue that “it was investiture, the putting on of clothes, that quite literally constituted a person as a monarch or a freeman of a guild or a household servant. Investiture was, in other words, the means by which a person was given a form, a shape, a social ‘depth’” (2).

16. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (London: Longman, 1984). All quotations to the poem will be from this edition.

17. *Renaissance Clothing*, 2.

18. *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, ed. Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997), 72–73. All quotations to the dialogue will be from this edition.

19. *OED*, s.v. “dight.” As in most of the poem, these cantos are highly reliant upon wordplay. For an examination of the function of Spenser’s allegory through puns see Maureen Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 33–42.

20. *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. “dighten”; *OED*, s.v. “fuck.”

21. *OED*, s.v. “rew.”

22. The episode uses forms of “thrall” eight times; “vassal,” three; and “slave,” once.

23. Smith also briefly describes a “fourth sort of men which doe not rule” (76). They include “day labourers, poore husbandmen, yea marchantes or retailers which have no free lande, copiholders, all artificers, as Taylers, Shoomakers, Carpenters, Brickemakers, Bricklayers, Masons, &c” (76). These men have “no voice nor authoritie in our common wealth, and no account is made of them but onlie to be ruled, not to rule other, and yet they be not altogether neglected” (76). They are not completely neglected (in Smith’s mind) because the parliament speaks for them.

24. *Vindicae, Contra Tyrannos: or, concerning the legitimate power of a prince over the people, and of the people over a prince*, trans. George Garnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 107. In this edition, Garnett surveys the scholarship concerning the work’s author and concludes that while the *Vindicae* is most likely the product of a close collaboration between Hubert Languet and Phillippe Duplessis-Mornay, there is not enough evidence to settle the authorship debate definitively (lv–lxxvi).

25. McCabe, 230.

26. While I read Spenser’s use of gender in the episode as metaphorically standing in for political relations, Quilligan posits that “what Britomart assists Artegall in achieving when she frees him from this slavery (‘so hard it is to be a woman’s slave’) is not merely the reorganization of the polis, which repeals from women their unlawful sovereignty, but, as I think we are allowed to imagine, a regendering of this labor force. It is right for women to be enslaved in rational, comely rows” (“On Renaissance Epic,” 26). Against Quilligan’s argument, I would suggest that Spenser’s examination of gender roles to think about political bonds implicitly critiques the patriarchal values that enable female consent to be ignored.

27. Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964).

28. Andrew Escobedo, “Daemon Lovers: Will, Personification, and Character,” *Spenser Studies* 22 (2007): 203–25, 212. Jeff Dolven’s discussion of poetic justice and allegory is a particularly helpful account. He suggests that there will always be

a violated body that cannot be subsumed fully by the allegorical signification of punishment. Jeff Dolven, *Scenes of Instruction in Renaissance Romance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 207–37.

29. Susanne L. Wofford, *The Choice of Achilles: The Ideology of Figure in the Epic* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 308–13.

30. Wofford, 319.

31. Escobedo, 204.

32. Wofford, 322.

33. Other episodes in *The Faerie Queene* do step outside of the allegory. For example, Chris Barrett, “Cetaceous Sin and Dragon Death: *The Faerie Queene*, Natural Philosophy, and the Limits of Allegory,” *Spenser Studies* 28 (2013): 145–64 argues that the poem suspends its allegorical mode to describe the dragon’s dead body in Book I, shifting to the idiom and protocols of natural philosophy. Her work illuminates the flexibility of the poem to move in and out of allegorical signification.

34. See *Amoretti* 42, 65, 67, and 73.

35. The quotation revises lines from Chaucer’s Franklin: “Love wol nat been con-streyned by maistrye. / Whan maistrie comth, the God of Love anon / Beteth his wynges, and farewel, he is gon!” See Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Franklin’s Tale*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 764–66.

36. Hamilton, 546.

37. J. H. Baker, *A Manual of Law French* (England: Avebury, 1979), 87; OED, s.v. “demesne”; Zurcher, 252.

38. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 66.